

## The Book of Daniel

### II. Comment and Commentary on the Book.

#### Part One: The Ministry of Daniel (and friends) in Babylon (1:1-6:28)

- A. The emergence of Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, 1:1-21
- B. The First Perplexing Dream of Nebuchadnezzar, 2:1-49
- C. The Protective Mercies of God-followers in Exile, 3:1-30

**Chapter Lesson:** Arrogance coupled with delusions of grandeur and hunger for power should not paralyze God's children who fear God more than temporal authorities because God will protect them regardless of the immediate consequence of their devotion and loyalty. Jesus told us, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt.10:28)."



-While there is no specific time stated of the events in the chapter, it seems connected to the previous chapter (likely the statue gave Nebuchadnezzar an idea). Further, it makes more sense that the king would want assurance of his unquestioned authority early in his reign than later in it. The disclosure of the previous chapter had little positive effect on the monarch.

-It seems that what Nebuchadnezzar was doing in erecting the statue and requiring worship by the entire empire's population was to unite his empire in a single religion under a singular head, himself.

-An interesting omission in the chapter is Daniel. Perhaps, the clue is found in his stature in the royal court. He may have been out of the picture due to official duties. Clearly, he would not have worshipped the statue (idolatry).

- 1. The erection of the golden statue, vv. 1-7
  - a. The fact, v. 1  
Nebuchadnezzar ordered the erection of a huge golden statue (90 feet in height and 9 feet in width) on the Plain of Dura, near the city of Babylon. Some have suggested that his clue came



- from the head of the statue of the previous chapter
- b. The summons to the ceremony of dedication, vv. 2-3  
The mandate was issued to all the officials of the empire from the most powerful to the least ("satraps," 120 in number, were rulers of provinces; "prefects" were governors under satraps).
  - c. The duties required at the ceremony of dedication, vv. 4-5  
They were to fall before the statue and worship the representation, likely of the king, and thereby establish political unity through religion in the empire and through him.
  - d. The penalty for noncompliance, v. 6  
The recompense was incineration, a known form of capital punishment in the empire. Furnaces or kilns of this type, used in melting metals, could reach as much as 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. There was simply no hope of escape.
  - e. The dedication ceremony, v. 7  
At the sound of music, the governmental officials fell in worship. All the high administrators of the empire submitted to a lifeless statue! The king seems to have achieved the unity of his kingdom.
2. The refusal of three Jewish exiles, vv. 8-18
    - a. The report of noncompliance to the king, vv. 8-12  
Some of the astrologers, likely remembering their rebuke caused by Nebuchadnezzar's distrust of them (chap. 2) and the Jewish youths' success (chap. 1), sought revenge in revealing the noncompliance of Daniel's three friends. The motive seems to have been resentment in the appointment of foreigners, as well as to ingratiate them with the king.
    - b. The inquiry of the king, vv. 13-14  
The king interrogated the three to determine if "... you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold..." For the accused, it entailed a violation of the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me... (Exod. 20:3)."
    - c. The test of obedience for the accused, v. 15  
For undisclosed motives, the king was willing to give them a second chance to obey rather than face the certainty of death. As no god was declared capable of revealing the unrevealed content of a dream, no god could save them from incineration (the king forgot the lesson of Daniel's God in the previous chapter)
    - d. The witness of the accused, vv. 16-18  
The three could neither deny the validity of the charge nor their guilt before an earthly judge; they confessed that God could preserve them from death, but, if He did not do so, they would not disobey the only true God!! Here is a remarkable statement of faith in the realities of life or death by them regardless of the outcome. It reminds me of Job's comment, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him... (Job 13:15)." Also, the voices of our many Christian martyrs through the centuries.
  3. The punishment the disobedient three, vv. 19-23  
In his response of horror and disgust, Nebuchadnezzar had the furnace "heated seven times more than normal" (a comment that is likely a figure of speech for an extreme). The extremity of the heat was such that that the soldiers carrying the three were consumed outside the furnace. The three were fully clothed and bound; there was no way of escape and clothing would be an accelerant (normally executions were performed without clothing).
  4. The amazing discovery of the king, vv. 24-27

- a. The fact of four, not three, vv. 24-25

As the king peered into the furnace (likely through a window, not from the top), he saw four walking, unbound, and unharmed. He identified the fourth as a god-like figure (“a son of the gods,” one of a race of the gods). The king was a polytheist and what he meant was that he was divine among many divinities.



Most, operating from Christian assumptions, have argued what the king

saw, and misinterpreted, was the preincarnate Christ. The three experience quite literally Isaiah 43:2: “When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

- b. The command of the king, v. 26  
Though the soldiers were consumed when they cast the three into the fiery abyss, the king was able to approach it without harm and called out to the three. The “stone cut without hands” that destroyed the statue of nations in chapter 2 is here recognized by Nebuchadnezzar as “the Most High God.”
- c. The return of the three, v. 27  
When the three emerged from the flames, there was no evidence that they had been in the furnace, not even an odor.
- 5. The king’s change of attitude, vv. 28-30
  - a. The praise of the God of the three, v. 28  
The king praises the God of the Hebrews for sending His messenger, a divine being, to deliver them.
  - b. The decree of sanction of the Jewish God, v. 29  
Nebuchadnezzar mandated that Israel’s God was not to be denigrated upon the penalty of death and the destruction of the property of the guilty. The reason being that only their God could accomplish such a feat.
  - c. The promotion of the three in the kingdom, v. 30

#### Teaching Points:

1. It is interesting to me that some of the astrologers that Daniel saved by revealing and interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue in the previous chapter, seek to incriminate Daniel’s friends in this one. Instead of thankfulness, greed for place and honor led to incrimination, a fruit of revengefulness. Why is it that the blightedness on human nature often shine forth more than thankfulness? What we lack more than what we have been given?
2. It seems thus far in our study three of the chapters have to do with the foolishness of a monarch and God’s attempt to bring him to a more realistic view of himself. To this point, he is willing to accept the fact of the existence of Israel’s God, even His superiority, but not that He alone is God. He was willing to accept His miracles, but not His person, His power but not His love. Do you know people like that?

3. The centerpiece of our chapter is the confession of the three Hebrews who would not worship the golden statue. They did not seek to exonerate themselves, accepting their guilt, and entrusted themselves to God. Their God was not their God because He favored them with peace and comfort, but because He is God. They did not seek to obey Him to receive certain earthly benefits, but because He is God.
4. The depth of their spiritual insight is a model for all of us. They believed in Him to such a degree that His will was more important to them than an immediate favorable outcome for themselves. True spiritual devotion is to live that He might be glorified. They viewed the honor of God through obedience greater than the duration of their lives. The goal for them was to glorify God whatever He deemed glorifying to Himself. They lived their lives for the sake of the giver of life, valuing their lives only for His glory.
5. While the three men did not know the outcome of their choice not to bow to the great statue, whether they would be spared or lose their lives, while they did not know what the outcome would be, it did not diminish their hope and confidence. Calvin stated it this way, "...if we are fully persuaded that God is the guardian of our life, surely no threat, nor terrors, nor death itself, should hinder us from persevering in our duties."